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Letter dated 18 November 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to international organizations, the parliaments of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation regarding the latest developments in Syria (see annex).

I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 18 November 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to international organizations, the parliaments of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation regarding the latest developments in Syria

Armed conflict in Syria that has lasted for six years now, as well as the latest tragic events unfolding before our eyes in eastern Aleppo, including the outrageous bombing of a United Nations humanitarian convoy on 19 September 2016 and the barbaric methods used for the total annihilation of the civilian population, have obliged the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to issue this statement.

From the very beginning of the Syrian conflict, Ukraine has been committed to its position regarding the territorial integrity of Syria and continues to stick to this consistent position as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

The final point of destination of the political process lies in the restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, the establishment of a credible, inclusive, secular transitional government of national unity, amendments to the constitution and the holding of free and fair elections.

The Ukrainian parliament supports the mission of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and other international initiatives of influential international organizations, such as the United Nations, the League of Arab States and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which are aimed at a settlement of the Syrian conflict.

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine is concerned with the dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, in which the number of Syrians forced to leave their homes has reached 13 million — more than half the pre-war population of the country. We also strongly condemn the use of chemical and other types of non-conventional weapons against civilians by the Syrian regime, with the direct support of its allies, first and foremost the Russian Federation, a permanent member of the Security Council, and by terrorist organizations.

In the course of 2016, namely, in February and September, the United States of America and the Russian Federation have twice reached an agreement on the cessation of hostilities between the sides in the Syrian conflict, and twice those agreements were breached. Neither side in the conflict has shown the necessary commitment to its obligations.

The Russian Federation is now waging two parallel wars with impunity: one in the Ukrainian Donbas and the other in Syria. As in Donbas, in Syria, Russia violated its obligations to de-escalate the conflict the very moment those arrangements were made and further stirred up violence right away by deploying additional troops, supplying more weapons and ammunition, waging war and spreading propaganda that more closely resembles that of the middle of the past century.

We deem as absolutely unacceptable the impunity of the Syrian regime and its allies in the mass killing of civilians that is currently happening in Aleppo. Of particular concern is the cynical missile bombing of the United Nations humanitarian convoy in Aleppo on 19 September 2016, which happened just after the Government of Syria had unilaterally walked away from the cessation of hostilities.

In the Security Council, Ukraine has, on multiple occasions, drawn attention to the fact that external support for the Syrian regime by Russia has become a decisive factor that has led to the present catastrophic status quo and resumption of the escalating violence.

We see a similarity between the aggressive policy of Russia in Ukraine and in Syria. Using the counter-terrorism motto as a smokescreen, the Russian leadership is pursuing the aim of supporting the dictatorial regimes and creating zones of instability in all regions that it considers its own spheres of influence.

We underscore the high risk of stirring up a full-scale sectarian war in the Middle East as a result of the events in Syria, as well as the fact that Russia uses the illegally occupied Crimea as a military hub to support and supply its military operations in Syria. While Russia is shamelessly "bragging" about the successful testing of its sophisticated weaponry in Syria, the death toll in Syria has reached 300,000, according to the official statistics.

The Russian Federation continues to demonstrate a complete neglect of the principles and norms of international humanitarian law and an absolute lack of any respect for basic human values.

Unfortunately, the Russian side continues to play a destructive role in the process of a peaceful settlement of the Syrian conflict and actively abuses its veto power in the Security Council, blocking any constructive initiative of the international community aimed at bringing peace to Syria.

During the meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Syria, held on 8 October 2016, Russia, in fact, voted for the continuation of its criminal policy of killing civilians and destroying civilian infrastructure in Syria. However, the results of the vote at the meeting showed that a majority of the Council members publicly condemned Russia's aggressive actions in Syria.

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine stands for an immediate cessation of the bloodshed, for the utmost use of political and diplomatic means to resolve the conflict and for the necessity of bringing to justice those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and the customs of war.

In this regard, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine urges:

- All concerned parties to contribute to the creation of the necessary preconditions for the restoration of the political settlement process aimed at establishing an inclusive transitional governance body in Syria, followed by the adoption of the constitution and the holding of elections in accordance with the 2012 Geneva communiqué and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015)

- The parties to the armed conflict in Syria:
  - To stop active military action in the entire territory of Syria, in particular in Aleppo, and to observe the cessation of hostilities in accordance with Security Council resolution 2268 (2016)
  - To respect the norms of international law, human rights and international humanitarian law
  - To provide conditions for the creation of humanitarian corridors to evacuate the wounded
  - To start negotiations on a political settlement of the conflict in Syria based on Security Council resolutions
  - To stop attacks on vehicles delivering humanitarian aid to the civilian population
- The parties to the armed conflict, in particular the Russian Federation, to halt indiscriminate attacks, stop the use of indiscriminate weapons and other prohibited means and warfare methods in Syria, including a halt to the use of the air force and artillery against civilians in areas with large concentrations of people and residential areas
- The Security Council to establish an international group of experts to investigate the war crimes of the Syrian regime and its ally, the Russian Federation
- All members of the Security Council to take full responsibility and appropriate measures to prevent a further escalation of the conflict and the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in front of all mankind, which poses the risk of repeating the tragedies of Srebrenica, Rwanda and Grozny
- International organizations, in particular the United Nations and the European Union:
  - To increase pressure on Putin's regime with the aim of making the Russian Federation commit itself to respecting international law, human rights and international humanitarian law during armed conflict on the territory of Syria
  - To investigate cases of serious violations of international law, human rights and international humanitarian law during armed conflict in Syria, in particular war crimes and crimes against humanity, and to bring to justice those who have committed the most serious crimes during the armed conflict in the territory of Syria
- International organizations and parliaments of foreign States:
  - To condemn the actions of the Russian Federation that are aimed at using the military conflict in Syria as a "testing ground" for its newest weapon systems and arms
  - To condemn the Syrian regime and the Russian Armed Forces in the territory of Syria for bombing areas with large concentrations of people and residential areas of civilians, as well as vehicles delivering humanitarian aid to the civilian population.